

the religious pluralism of our country as with current practice rather than the appointment of a single individual charged with responsibility for the task. America's religious community is simply too diverse to expect one person to represent all of our concerns adequately. Minority religious communities are often the ones most vulnerable to mistreatment and thus especially need to be included.

2. Automatic Sanctions—The bill's approach to sanctions is overly simplistic. Americans must work in close partnership with people of faith in countries where persecution is occurring. How do they say we and our government can best be helpful? Would sanctions help, or would they hurt the wrong people? What other channels exist for pressure and protest? Clearly, sanctions should not be ruled out as a means to address religious persecution, but they should not be an automatic or first option.

3. Asylum Provisions—This legislation would change the refugee determination process to give special attention to those being singled out for persecution on the basis of religion. Under both international conventions and U.S. refugee law, there are five grounds for being granted refugee status: persecution on the basis of race, nationality, religion, membership in a social group, and political opinion. We do not support singling out religion as being more important than these other forms of persecution. Moreover, over the years, we have not supported designation of groups as refugees for resettlement, but rather have advocated for a case-by-case review of individual claims.

Obviously, there are people who leave their communities and countries because they are persecuted for their religious faith and those people should find the protection they need—whether in a neighboring country of asylum or in a third country through resettlement. But this is already part of international and national law. Singling out persecution of Christians as somehow being worse than persecution of political dissidents or a particular ethnic group undermines a lot of this international law we have worked so hard to get implemented.

What we can advocate is better application of existing law so that all of those claiming persecution get a fair hearing and that the adjudication procedures are both just and humane.

Finally, we believe some measure of humility is required as we act to stop religious persecution outside the United States. This is particularly urgent in light of the communications the NCCC has received from Christians in Egypt, China and other nations who express concern over America's eagerness to impose its political and constitutional ideals on others. As the General Secretary has stated: "Although we cherish the American model of religious liberty and its meaning for us, we recognize that it is not the only model. Some of our most trusted friends in the world community worship and serve God in state churches. Others see toleration, rather than full freedom, as the touchstone for religious rights. In short, due consideration must be given to cultural values and existing religious life, especially on such matters as world missions, proselytizing and areas of permissible regulations."

In short, not all encroachments on religious freedom rise to the level of persecution. And, even when they do, we must be careful to act in a way that alleviates rather than aggravates the problem.

For that reason, the NCCC and its member communions should consider an idea that has been proposed by members of the United

States Senate: the establishment of a Commission on Security and Cooperation in Asia modeled after its European counterpart. Such a commission might be the forum where citizens of the United States could press their legitimate concerns about religious persecution in that region without further aggravating the problem.

In sum, the NCCC maintains its commitment to human rights and religious freedom for all persons. We believe this can be achieved through a variety of means including prayer, reporting, dialogue, protests, boycotts, and urging diplomatic pressure, and, in some cases, sanctions. We urge Congress and the Administration to use their full powers to better enforce existing national and international laws which seek to protect individuals from religious persecution. Although H.R. 1685/S.772 have some sections the NCCC could support, other sections (particularly 5 and 7) are highly objectionable. For that reason, the NCCC cannot support H.R. 1685/S.772 until and unless significant changes are made.

SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 16, 1997

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, the Asbury United Methodist Church, celebrating 161 years in the Washington, DC community, is conducting its 11th annual homecoming September 23 through 28, 1997. Asbury's extraordinary history and contributions warrant praise and honor from this body and I ask that you join me in rendering that honor today.

Asbury United Methodist Church was organized in 1836 when a group led by Eli Nugent left the Foundry Methodist Church to form its own congregation. The first Asbury Church was a white frame building on the same site as the current Asbury Church edifice.

Mr. Speaker, Asbury's growth and history are intricately woven with that of African-American history. The decade of the 1860's brought civil war. Asbury opened its doors to provide space for classrooms for the fleeing and newly freed slaves. Operated under the auspices of various freedmen's aid societies, schools and classes helped provide the basic education needed if former slaves were to survive emancipation. These programs continued through the early 1870's.

Asbury's leadership remained in the hands of whites until the time of the emancipation. The Washington Annual Conference was founded in 1864. Asbury's role and leadership as a black congregation was firmly established with the appointment of the first black pastor, Rev. James Harper. Asbury experienced its greatest growth during the Reconstruction era. New organizations and programs were added and by the 1880's the Sunday school and choir received frequent mention in the press. This growth was accompanied by both missionary efforts and doctrinal disputes which led to the formation of other congregations that separated from the main body. These were Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion in 1847, Simpson Methodist Episcopal in 1875, and Peoples Congregational in 1891.

Mr. Speaker, with the dynamic leadership of ministers, Rev. J.W.E. Bowen, Rev. I.L. Thomas, and Rev. Matthew Clair, Sr., Asbury added new programs, expanded its services, and built a new edifice. By 1915, with a membership of over 1,000 the structure built in 1866 could no longer contain the church body. Under the leadership of Reverend Clair, the old building was replaced with a two story structure of Gothic design.

By the early decades of the 20th century, with its emphasis on social justice, enlightened efforts on behalf of the race and a range of programs for the education and social improvements of its youth, Asbury was attracting Washington, DC's most prominent citizens. The press described it as the "National Church of Negro Modernism."

Mr. Speaker, the heritage and traditions that shaped Asbury's illustrious history continue to inspire its current membership. Asbury has established programs for the hungry from the soup kitchen of the 1930's to its food pantry in the 1980's. Its activities for transients and the homeless includes regularly scheduled breakfast and an outreach center which distributes clothing and personal items. It has operated the Asbury Federal Credit Union since the 1950's and the educational building, which houses the Child Development Center, was completed in 1973. Asbury Dwellings contains 147 apartments for senior citizens and handicapped individuals. The church once operated community centers in Washington, DC and supported a church and school in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Asbury now provides support to Africa University in Zimbabwe and to TransAfrica.

Asbury was placed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 1984 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 1, 1986. During its 150th anniversary, an endowment was established to support programs in education, outreach, history, and heritage. A history center was established to collect, preserve and disseminate Asbury's history.

Mr. Speaker, the leadership of pastors such as Bishop Matthew W. Clair and the Reverends Robert Moten Williams, James D. Foy, Frank L. Williams, and Joshua Hutchins and the commitment of the membership are very much in evidence today. This legacy continues under Asbury's present senior minister, Dr. Eugene Matthews who was appointed in 1992. Asbury's members now number 1,700 and routinely extends itself into the community-at-large. The church supports the programs of the Washington Interfaith Network [WIN] and the Holy Boldness activities envisioned by Bishop Felton E. May of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Asbury is also a leader in the United Methodist community with its emphasis on Discipleship Bible Study, Covenant Discipleship, and class leader programs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this body join me in saluting the Asbury United Methodist Church on the occasion of its 11th annual homecoming, "Nurturing, Outreach and Witnessing Into the Twenty First Century." I am proud to recount Asbury's rich history and to emphasize its role in this community since its inception in the 1800's.

KEEPING THE ARTS ALIVE IN THE
CONEJO**HON. BRAD SHERMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 16, 1997

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to rise today to pay tribute to those who preserve the dream of the arts and delivering artistic entertainment to local people of our community. It is therefore with great pleasure that I honor the Twilight Award honorees, Rob O'Neill, Ann Hammerslag, Bob Lewis, Alex Fiore, and our Special Achievement Award recipients, the Medders family, for their dedication to the arts. These individuals have given their souls to promoting the performing arts in our community.

The Twilight Awards ceremony provides the Gold Coast Performing Arts Association an opportunity to honor and thank several individuals each year who, in their own way, have promoted and encouraged the success of the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza and the realization of our collective dream of bringing the performing arts to the Conejo. The gathering also gives Gold Coast and its subsidiary groups, Cabrillo Music Theatre, Santa Susana Repertory Co., Young Artists Ensemble, and the Gold Coast Theatre Conservatory a public occasion to display its successes.

Rob O'Neill is a member of board of directors of Alliance for the Arts and member of the board of directors for the Cabrillo Music Theater, the preeminent theater company presenting full seasons of Broadway musicals at the Probst Center for the Performing Arts. As an active member of these associations Rob has dedicated his own musical and production expertise to the production of "Pump Boys and Dinettes" and next year's musical, "A Little Night Music." These musicals provide local performers the opportunity to show off their skills and also allow local audiences to enjoy popular musical productions. I thank Rob for his great work.

Ann Hammerslag is commonly known as the brains and the heartbeat of the theaters department. She has managed the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza's business since before the plaza opened. As executive secretary of the theaters department of the city of Thousand Oaks, Ann has the experience and motivation to make the Gold Coast Performing Arts Center the success that it is.

Bob Lewis, the former mayor of Thousand Oaks is now chairman of the Alliance for the Arts. As chairman he oversees the management and growth of an endowment for local arts-related programs and education outreach. His contributions keep arts alive in the Conejo.

Alex Fiore is considered the individual most instrumental in bringing the dream of the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza to reality during his 30-plus years on the city council. Today, Alex guides the arts plaza's progress from his seat on the board of governors of the Civic Arts Plaza.

This year, the Twilight Awards gathering presents its first annual Special Achievement Award to the Medders family, who represent the highest tenet of volunteerism. Mardy is active on numerous boards of directors, including the Gold Coast Performing Arts Association, Alliance for the Arts, and the New West Symphony Guild. John is a physician and ad-

ministrator for Kaiser Permanente, who is also active in our community. Their children, Lyndsey, Brian, Emily, and Brett, follow in their mother's footsteps in assisting in every Gold Coast Performing Arts Center Association production and event. The Medders family is truly a gift to the arts in the Conejo.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, please join me in honoring these individuals for their dedication to the arts in our community. I stand proud to recognize Ann Hammerslag, Alex Fiore, Bob Lewis, Rob O'Neill, and the Medders family for their dedication. It is an honor to have the Gold Coast Performing Arts Association in my district.

1997 ELLIS ISLAND MEDAL OF
HONOR RECIPIENTS**HON. DAN BURTON**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 16, 1997

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following:

ELLIS ISLAND, NY, MAY 4.—Standing on the hallowed grounds of Ellis Island—the portal through which 17 million immigrants entered the United States—a cast of ethnic Americans who have made significant contributions to the life of this nation, among them President William Jefferson Clinton, NYS Attorney General Dennis Vacco, National Football League Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and Little Caesar Enterprises Chairman Michael Illitch, today were presented with the coveted Ellis Island Medal of Honor at an emotionally uplifting ceremony.

NECO's annual medal ceremony and reception on Ellis Island in New York Harbor is the Nation's largest celebration of ethnic pride. This year's event was dedicated to the memory of Albert Shanker, a 1995 Ellis Island Medal recipient and former President of the American Federation of Teachers and a Vice President of the AFL-CIO.

Representing a rainbow of ethnic origins, this year's recipients received their awards in the shadow of the historic Great Hall, where the first footsteps were taken by the millions of immigrants who entered the U.S. in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

"Today we honor great ethnic Americans who, through their achievements and contributions, and in the spirit of their ethnic origins, have enriched this country and have become role models for future generations," said NECO Chairman William Denis Fugazy. "In addition, we honor the immigrant experience—those who passed through this Great Hall decades ago, and the new immigrants who arrive on American soil seeking opportunity."

Mr. Fugazy added, "It doesn't matter how you got here or if you already were here. Ellis Island is a symbol of the freedom, diversity and opportunity—ingredients inherent in the fabric of this nation. Although many recipients have no familial ties to Ellis Island, their ancestors share similar histories of struggle and hope for a better life here."

Established in 1986 by NECO, the Ellis Island Medals of Honor pay tribute to the ancestry groups that comprise America's unique cultural mosaic. To date, some 700 ethnic American citizens and native Americans have received medals.

NECO is the largest organization of its kind in the U.S. serving as an umbrella group for 75 ethnic organizations and whose mandate is to preserve ethnic diversity, pro-

mote ethnic and religious equality, tolerance and harmony, and to combat injustice, hatred, and bigotry.

Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients are selected each year through a national nomination process. Screening committees from NECO's member organizations select the final nominees, who are then considered by the Board of Directors.

Past Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients have included several U.S. Presidents, entertainers, athletes, entrepreneurs, religious leaders and business executives, such as Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, George Bush, Richard Nixon, George Pataki, Mario Cuomo, Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Michael Douglas, Gloria Estefan, Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Elie Wiesel, Muhammad Ali, Mickey Mantle, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Barbara Walters, Terry Anderson and Dr. Michael DeBakey.

Congratulations to the 1997 Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients.

Beny Alagem, Israeli, business leader; Manfred Alstadt, German, business leader; Denis Andreuzzi, Italian, business leader; Stuart Appelbaum, Lithuanian/Russian, labor leader; Edward F. Arrigoni, Italian, business leader; Ralph A. Balzano, Italian, government official; Raphael Baron, Russian, business leader; Herbert F. Boeckmann, II, German, entrepreneur; William Bolster, English/Irish, media executive; J. Frank Brown, Irish, business leader; Young In Chung, Korean, community leader; William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States; Hon. Nicholas Coffinas, Hellenic, community leader; Joseph M. Cohen, Polish/Russian, business leader; Geneos Pete Cokinos, Hellenic, oil producer.

Jerry Colangelo, Italian, business leader; Hon. Martin E. Connor, Irish, NYS senate minority leader; Daniel F. Cremins, Irish, business leader; Sr. Catherine Crumlish, RSM, Irish, community leader; Richard E. Dauch, German, manufacturing leader; J. Morton Davis, Hungarian/Polish, business leader/author; Hon. Vincent A. Delorio, Italian, attorney; Ralph Destino, Italian, business leader; George Douris, Hellenic, business/community leader posthumous; Irma B. Elder, Syrian/Mexican, business/community leader; Dr. Saul J. Farber, Lithuanian, physician/educator; Ralph D. Farkas, Israeli/Czech, business leader; George Filios, Hellenic, business leader; Michael C. Finnegan, Esq., Irish, business/government leader; Edward Fredkin, Russian, scientist.

Peter C. Gazes, MD, Hellenic, physician/educator; Peter A. Georgescu, Romanian, business leader; Kenneth J. Gorman, Irish, business leader; Salvatore, "Sonny" Grosso, Italian, television & movie producer; Rajat Gupta, Asian Indian, business leader; Marife Hernandez, Hispanic, civic leader; Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, German/Irish, president emeritus U. of Notre Dame; Thomas Y. Hobart, Jr., English/German/Italian, labor leader; Harry G. Hohn, German/Irish, business leader; Hirair Hovnanian, Armenian, business/community leader; Thomas M. Hricik, Slovak, fraternalist; Denis M. Hughes, Irish/Italian, labor leader; Michael Ilitch, Macedonian, business/community leader; Elham Jabiru-Shayota, Chaldean, business leader; Caroline R. Jones, African, business leader.

Myong Y. Juch, Korean, business/community leader; Charles Kanakis, Jr., MD, Hellenic, physician/community leader; Constantine N. Kangles, Esq., Hellenic, attorney/publisher/community leader; Adib Kassiss, Lebanese, business/community leader; Henry Kaufman, German, business leader; John H. Klein, German/Irish, business leader; Herbert V. Kohler, Jr., Austrian, business leader; Kamil Kubik, Czech, artist; Andreas C. Kyprianides, Cypriot, community leader;